

The Natural Mysticism of Indigenous Australian Traditions

Joan Hendriks & Gerard Hall SM

ABSTRACT

This paper is offered in an exploratory way as a possible path for dialogue between Indigenous Australians and people of other religious, spiritual and cultural traditions. Although couched in the language of the Western academy, including its notions of mysticism, the aim is to establish the *sui generis* nature of Indigenous Australian experience that centres on the sacred reality of space. It is only when the ‘otherness’ of this experience is appreciated on its own terms that a ‘fusion of horizons’ between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples becomes a possibility. What we call a natural mysticism of embodied knowledge of place is very different to the mysticism of the romantic or theistic traditions—or even to the non-theistic traditions of the East.

The other burden of this paper is to suggest that Indigenous Australians are not only inheritors of a spiritual tradition that reaches back to the very beginnings of human life and culture, but that the insights of that tradition are crucial for reconnecting us to nature, the earth, the cosmos and, ultimately, to God. This is not the experience of God *in, above* or *of* nature; but the experience of a Presence in which humans know in a bodily and profound way their connection to the cosmic rhythms (rhythmic events) and the divine mystery (abiding events). This is an authentic and original expression of what Panikkar calls the ‘cosmotheandric’ experience in which the divine, human and cosmic energies are at one. There is much to dialogue about.

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Important Caveats

Speaking about Indigenous Australian traditions—or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples—is as abstract as, and possibly more unhelpful than, talking about religion or mysticism or metaphysics as overarching categories. The great danger is that we not only bundle together all Indigenous Australians under a single umbrella of ‘thoughts, practices and beliefs’; in many writings there is a tendency to place all the world’s Indigenous peoples under a similar, if somewhat larger, umbrella. In this sense, we must be a little hesitant to categorize Indigenous Australians in terms of non-Indigenous categories. There is, to use Panikkar’s phrase, the real danger of “intellectual colonization” in which we too

readily apply foreign pre-conceptions onto the 'other', whether in a romantic or derogatory way, thereby making the other an intellectual extension of ourselves. This may placate our fears, but does little to enhance authentic understanding.

So, at the start of this paper, we make the following pleas: (1) we do not and cannot speak for all or most Indigenous Australians; (2) when we use Indigenous terms such as *alcheringa* or *dadirri*, these are always terms derived from a particular people, tribe and place which may have "functional equivalents" in other Indigenous groups, but are never 'simply the same' in meaning or experience; (3) it is the particularity of land, people and place that circumscribes the distinctive spiritualities of each Indigenous clan. We will return to this with reflections on the sacred particularity of place.

With these caveats and expressions of hesitancy, Indigenous Australians are ready to enter into dialogue with peoples from other traditions who make a place at the common table of our shared humanity. Like others, Indigenous Australians have something to learn but also much to teach—even if we do not share the same language. And this can be the rub: the spiritual experiences of Indigenous Australians are not accessible through word, text or scriptures. Or, to express this more accurately, the cosmos in which we live, the land on which we stand, the spirit-place from which we derive our being . . . these are word, text, scripture and place of revelation. As with the scriptural texts of other traditions, it is the land itself which gives life, forges identity, reveals the Sacred. In this sense, Indigenous Australians embody and express in an original and striking way what we hesitantly call here, for the sake of dialogue, a kind of nature mysticism.

Generalized Overview

The "natural mysticism" of Indigenous Australian peoples differs from the "nature mysticism" of the 19th century Romantic movement. The latter is the personal, ecstatic experience of unity with nature accompanied by intense, *sui generis*,

visionary moments. By contrast, Indigenous Australian peoples' experience of nature is more cosmic, more communal, more natural. It is not the ecstatic, unrepeatable experience of a chosen individual, but the ordinary, every-day, abiding experience of the sacred and interconnected unity of all beings with the earth, cosmos and ultimate reality. One is not separate from this reality: in fact, there is *no one*—nor for that matter *no Other*—separate or separable from creation and the natural world.¹

This is not to deny the reality of the *spirit*-world. To the contrary, the Ancestors, Great Spirit and other spirits are known precisely through the experience of life, creation and the cosmos. This deeply incarnational spirituality is a truly cosmic mysticism in which nature, the earth, the Great Spirit and spirit-guides teach all there is to know. It is a sacramental vision permeating everything.² In this sense, the Sacred is not a separate or separable reality one experiences by taking a moment outside time; it is by living in time—or rather, as we will see, in place and in harmony with all things—the Sacred is manifest.

Personal identity, human community and cosmic harmony are one-and-the-same. This is the experiential understanding—or abiding myth—awakened in Indigenous people from birth. If we can speak of ecstatic moments of unity with the created universe, ancestors, greater and lesser spirits, these are the rites of passage and associated rituals that affirm one's mystical relationship with the earth, the tribe and the cosmos. Through this natural experience, Indigenous Australians form an intimate relationship with the earth which they cannot 'own' but learn to 'live' with in harmony, to 'dwell' on or 'inhabit' as an integral part of themselves. This explains the difficulty Indigenous people have in relating to 'private' property and 'individual' ownership which mark European and other historical civilizations.³

Four integral ideas derived from Indigenous Australian peoples highlight this natural cosmic mysticism:

1. Alcheringa:⁴ The experience of the Eternal Now (*tempiternity*) arising from the intense relationship with Land, Earth, Nature that is the very life-blood and distinctive spirituality of Aboriginal peoples. This experience is handed down in story, ritual and song across generations.

2. The Dreaming:⁵ Not unbridled imagination, but gifted insight, cosmic song. Enshrined in creative art symbolizing the journeys of tribal ancestors. Connects one in a vital way with Mother Earth and Creator Spirit. The eternal presence touches time and passing reality providing meaning, direction, purpose, energy, life, spirit—making every moment sacred.

3. Corroboree:⁶ Ritual ceremonies relate the myths and stories of the ancestors. Sacred dances take place at times of initiation, death and the like in accordance with laws of the Dreaming.

4. Dadirri:⁷ Inner deep listening; quiet still awareness; mystical apprehension. A living contemplation turned outwards to the land and things about us, but deeply conscious of living springs within. Voice of Creator Spirit. We call on Dadirri; Dadirri calls on us. Reconnection with the Sacred centre of all life.

Many of these experiences are 'broken' as a result of European colonization. But one cannot wipe out 40,000 years of cultural life and memory in the short space of 200 years. There is the added realization that these are precisely the values and attitudes that all human civilizations need to affirm and integrate into their own life-worlds lest we totally lose our way and destroy the world we inhabit together. There can be no *cosmotheandric* vision without this deep sense of our oneness with all reality.⁸ Such a vision does not return to the past in a nostalgic way; nor does it deny the importance of this type of natural or cosmic mysticism for reconnecting us with the earth in profound and vital relationship.

Mysticism of Place

The Australian Aboriginal way of being-in-the-world is not—or, at least, prior to the experience of Western colonization, was not—centred on temporality, but spatiality. According to Tony Swain, the failure of Europeans to appreciate—and enter into effective dialogue with—Aboriginal Australians has much to do with this disparity of world-horizons which centre on space (Aboriginal) and time (European).⁹ Aboriginal attachment to a particular place, land, country or sacred site belongs to another order of experience, a different type of consciousness—indeed what we can reasonably call a mystical experience of place. This requires some explanation.

The notion of *Alcheringa* or Dreaming, admittedly often (mis)translated Dreamtime,¹⁰ expresses a specific ontology that inextricably links all life to land, place and country. With reference to the Pintupi people [an Aboriginal people of the Western Desert region of Australia], “individuals come from the country, and this relationship provides a primary basis for owning a sacred site and for living in the area”.¹¹ Tony Swain elucidates this relationship between individual and land with reference to Ancestral beings and human conception.

As Ancestral beings gave extension to place they imbued it with their own being, and it is this stuff of existence, this life potential of land, which is lodged within a woman who thence is pregnant. The mother does not contribute to the ontological substance of the child, but rather ‘carries’ a life whose essence belongs, and belongs alone, to a site. The child’s core identity is determined by his or her place of derivation. ... Life is annexation of place.¹²

Consequently, a child’s identity is derived from a particular place marked by a spiritual and totemic ancestry. So important is this tie of Aboriginal people to a specific place that they perceive the land around them as everywhere filled with marks of individual and ancestral origins as it is dense with story and myth. For Aboriginals to be removed from that country to which they belong is for them to be deprived of their very soul. It is their spiritual and physical homeland. It is no wonder then that the institutionalized practice of forced separation of children

from their families, country and places of origin—the so-called ‘Stolen Generation’—resulted in such profound psychic and spiritual displacement.¹³

When we say that spatiality—the sacred sense of place—is the distinguishing feature of Aboriginal ontology, we are not suggesting a world devoid of past, present and future. However, such a world does not privilege temporality or history in the way of most other cultures. The abiding place of the Ancestors in Aboriginal cosmology, for example, is not understood in terms of a lineal genealogy. Time does not link the Ancestors to the present; it is through place or country that the rhythmic events of life are co-joined through the Dreaming to the time before time. In the words of one commentator:

The shallowness of genealogical memory is not a form of cultural amnesia but rather a way of focusing on the basis of all relationships—that is, the *Jukurrpa* and the land. By not naming deceased relatives, people are able to stress a relationship directly to the land. It is not necessary to trace back through many generations to a founding ancestor to make a claim.¹⁴

According to Swain, there are two types of events which circumscribe Aboriginal life which he terms Abiding events and rhythmic events. Abiding events are in one sense linked to the past—and in that sense to the ‘time’ of the Dreaming; but the Dreaming is also now.¹⁵ If we are to use temporal metaphors to speak of Abiding Events mediated through the Dreaming, we are immediately led to an atemporal realm elsewhere described as “Everywhen”, “Eternal Now” or “Ancestral Present”.¹⁶ All this is to suggest that Abiding events are beyond change; history and time are irrelevant.

Aboriginals also construct their world according to rhythmic events. Again, one is mistaken to suggest that Aboriginals live according to ‘cyclical time’—sometimes stated to make a distinction with ‘linear time’. Rather, says Swain, they live a “sophisticated pattern of events in accordance with their rhythms”.¹⁷ The manner in which rhythmic life events are co-joined to Ancestral Abiding events is not through memory, genealogy, history or time (linear or cyclical), but through place.

Aboriginals frequently refer to “the Law” which can also be misunderstood in translation. It is not the same as the pre-determined, eternal, universal law of ‘historical’ traditions. Aboriginal Law is literally grounded in place—and in the Dreamings. Yanyuwa Elder, Mussolini Harvey, comments:

White people ask us all the time, what is Dreaming? This is a hard question because Dreaming is a really big thing for Aboriginal people. ... The Dreamings made our Law ... This law is the way we live, our rules. This law is our ceremonies, our songs, our stories ... The law was made by the Dreamings.¹⁸

Dreamings, like places and events, are plural. In this sense, a mountain, river or country holds sacred knowledge, wisdom and moral truth; but it does not constitute the whole of the Law or the Dreaming. The Aboriginal world is radically pluralistic precisely because there is no pre-ordained cosmic order originating in the temporal priority of *logos*. Following Faust: “In the beginning was the *Act*”.¹⁹ Beneath the rhythmic events of life are Abiding or enduring-place Events. W. E. Stanner goes so far as to say that Aborigines “are not simply a people ‘without a history’; they are people who have been able, in a sense, to ‘defeat history’” through their enduring, sacred relationship with place.²⁰

We may well ask, then, how this mystical sense of place-without-time is articulated and communicated in Aboriginal societies? The answer to this is through the medium of the Dreamings, corroborees (ritual ceremonies) and story-tellings that communicate the sacred power of place or country. We will return to this. For the moment, let us ask how non-Aboriginal people can begin to understand what must seem such a strange mystical path or apprehension of reality? In this regard, we can turn to the writings of some European philosophers who recognize a particular quality of bodily knowing and knowledge of place that is sensory, affective, aesthetic and practical.²¹ Such knowledge is not straightforwardly communicable in a discursive way because it concerns the human significance of place and movement. A good example is the player in action on the football field where the field is not an ‘object’ so much as an extension of the player’s own being.²² Another example is a person’s recollection

of the childhood home which has its own incommunicable resonances. In other words, there is a form of knowledge that is—to use Bachelard's phrase—“physically inscribed in us”.²³ Or, with reference to German theologian Karl Rahner, the deepest knowledge we have as human beings is not ‘consciousness of’ some object beyond ourselves, but ‘participative knowledge’ which has its own profound, practical and ‘life-saving’ intelligence.²⁴

With reference to Aboriginal peoples, what we have been terming the mysticism of place is more accurately described as the mysticism of *embodied* knowledge of place or country. Among other rituals, it is the role of the corroboree to mediate meanings that can only be known in their embodied responses.²⁵ What these communicate is some larger cosmological or metaphysical sense of things that is beyond words (and beyond time)—or, as stated, it connects rhythmic events to Abiding events. The corroboree, as an expression of “representation space”, is “alive: it speaks ... it embraces the loci of passion, of action, and of lived situations”.²⁶ Only embodied participation in the corroboree—as expression of participation in space—provides human and sacred meaning. In other parlance, this amounts to ‘practical belief’ which is not a state of mind, but a state of the body.²⁷ This is expressed most profoundly in dance, movement and song mediating an entire cosmology “beyond the reach of consciousness and explicit statement”.²⁸ Such an embodied knowledge of place has its own deep intelligence of the natural world that is “humanly more authentic and more revealing of its true character than are more abstractly cerebral kinds of response”.²⁹

All that we have been saying in regard to Aboriginal mysticism of place requires heightened spiritual awareness that realizes itself in cosmic terms.³⁰ This is the experience that the Ngangikurungkurr people call Dadirri.³¹ Dadirri, as we have said, requires deep inner listening and quiet still awareness; as a form of contemplation, it is turned outward to the land and things about us as well as being deeply conscious of the living springs within. There is a sense of the whole that includes the sacred reality of land or country and the realization that human

community is itself dependant on our shared connection to place. So, while a big part of Dadirri is listening, it also includes story-telling, corroborees, smoking ceremonies, and sounds of the didgeridoo or clapsticks. Dadirri makes one feel whole again as part of tribe and country; it connects one to Mother Earth, Sacred Spirit or whatever words we use to describe the ultimate mystery of all life.³² If we were to describe this experience in terms of the divine mystery or the God of nature, we need to understand this in the manner that Panikkar outlines:

The experience of God in nature is not primarily the experience of the one who makes it, whether creator or artist. Nor is it the experience of another force that sustains or gives existence to what is called the natural order. It is not what our aesthetic sense or calculation discovers, what the microscope, the telescope, or even rational thought may reveal. It is not a question of raising ourselves to the level of nature's author or penetrating the mysterious depths of the cosmos. It is primarily an experience more simple and more profound, not an experience of immanence or transcendence, nor an experience of an Other, but the experience of a Presence, of the most real presence of the actual thing in itself, from which we are not absent. To repeat, the experience of God is the total experience of the human being, in which nature is not absent.³³

Conclusion

The hermeneutic task of experiencing, understanding and interpreting the spirituality of Indigenous Australian traditions in a manner that speaks to and challenges the spiritual approaches of other traditions still largely awaits us. Our attempt here to enter that task is admittedly modest and exploratory—even as we believe it to be of singular importance. We have chosen to use the language and categories of thought provided by the anthropological, philosophical and religious sciences developed primarily in and for the western academy. This also makes it a risky enterprise as we constantly return to the question of how and/or to what extent Indigenous Australian peoples recognize themselves in our interpretation.³⁴ Yet, from our perspective, there is value in at least attempting to articulate Aboriginal spirituality as a natural mysticism of embodied knowledge of place. The 'otherness' of this experience will not be lost on western ears. Yet,

those familiar with Panikkar's thought will find resonances with the cosmotheandric vision, especially in regard to the human experience of the Sacred generated by place and cosmos.

In this regard, we believe that Aboriginal Australians are inheritors of a spiritual tradition—a way of 'knowing' and 'being' in the world through embodied participation in space—that connects humans to the cosmic rhythms (rhythmic events) and the divine mystery (abiding events). This is a genuine cosmotheandric spirituality. To also call this mystical experience may appear problematic, but it is not without foundation. Of course, it is a very different kind of mysticism compared, say, to the theistic or romantic traditions. However, it is equally profound and urgently necessary since it establishes such a vital and sacred connection to "the land and things about us", a connection we ignore at our own (and the earth's) peril. What is being offered here is not so much a new idea as a new experience—or rather, an experience that reaches back to the very beginnings of human life and culture. We are earthly creatures: the earth is part of us, and we are part of the earth. This is the re-connection people of all traditions need to make in order to discover anew that "every living thing is sacred".³⁵ Or, in Panikkar's neat phrase, "the experience of God is the total experience of the human being, in which nature is not absent".³⁶

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¹In this regard, Panikkar notes: "The experience of the divine in nature is not reducible to an earthly numinous feeling regarding a *mysterium fascinans et tremens*. The relationship is a great deal more intimate: it is not a matter of performing a pirouette in order to leap to a first efficient cause that is separate and separable from what is caused. 'Creation' is inseparable from the 'Creator'." R. Panikkar, *The Experience of God: Icons of the Mystery* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), p. 128.

² The sacramental vision of the natural mysticism of Indigenous peoples is developed by Wayne Teasdale, *The Mystic Heart* (Novato CA: New World Library, 2001), pp. 173ff.

³ If there is a sense of ownership in regard to land, Aboriginal people give the priority of ownership to the land rather than to people. Joan Hendriks expresses this reversal: "We

are spiritual people who believe we come from the land. In a sense we are the land and *the land owns us*. The earth is our Mother". Private manuscript. Emphasis added.

⁴ For a poetic and insightful account, see R. Cameron, "Alcheringa" in *Alcheringa: The Australian Experience of the Sacred* (Homebush: St. Paul's, 1992), pp. 77-79.

⁵ See, for example, Cameron, "Dream Cycle" in *Alcheringa*, pp. 55-60.

⁶ The 'Corroboree' is but one form of many sacred ceremonies and rituals. Examples in Cameron, "Ceremony and Ritual" in *Alcheringa*, pp. 61-74.

⁷ This account is largely dependant on Miriam Rose Ungmerr-Baumann in *A Spirituality of Catholic Aborigines and the Struggle for Justice*, collective work (Brisbane: Brisbane Catholic Archdiocese, 1993), pp. 34-37.

⁸ See R. Panikkar, *The Cosmotheandric Experience: Emerging Religious Consciousness* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1993) for a clear exposition of the 'cosmotheandric vision'.

⁹ Tony Swain, *A Place for Strangers* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 2ff. Acknowledging the tension between these two ways of being-in-the-world, Swain insists this is no final barrier to understanding provided there is (to quote Gadamer) resistance to 'naive assimilation' of the other and commitment to a genuine 'fusion of horizons'. To this point, he argues, it is the Aboriginal Australians who have done most of the accommodating in their encounter with the non-Aboriginal other. They have entered the hermeneutic task although, once again, in a way that privileges spacial over temporal thought processes.

¹⁰ Swain argues that 'Dreamplace' is a much better translation, pp. 14-22.

¹¹ Fred R. Myers, *Pintupi Country, Pintupi Self* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1986), p. 51.

¹² Swain, p. 39.

¹³ For comments on this practice which existed from colonial times until the 1970s, see Jeff Malpas, *Place and Experience: A Philosophical Topography* (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.3ff. Only in 2008 has the Australian Government made a public apology. Loss of connection with the land is one of the significant after-effects of the forced separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families noted in the report of the national inquiry into the 'stolen generation'. As one submission put it: "Separation has broken or disrupted not only the links that Aboriginals have with other Aboriginals, but, importantly, the spiritual connection we should have had with our country, our land. It is vital to our healing process that these bonds be established or re-affirmed." *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families* (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997).

¹⁴ D. Bell, cited in Swain, p. 23.

¹⁵ The best word to translate this experience of Abiding Events is what Panikkar terms “tempiternity”: “The future of the *today* is not tomorrow; it is in trespassing the inauthenticity of the day in order to reach the *to-day* in which paradise abides. The meaning of life is not tomorrow but today.” Tempiternity is a feature of “transhistorical consciousness (which) attempts to integrate the past and future into the present; past and future as seen as mere abstractions”. *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, p. 124f.

¹⁶ “Everywhen”, a term employed by W. H. Stanner, was made known to us by Paul Sullivan SM (private conversation). Rod Cameron uses the expression “Eternal Now”; Tony Swain refers to “Ancestral Present”. See Cameron, p. 77; and Swain, pp. 15 & 22.

¹⁷ Swain, p. 20. Here, Swain also cites Catherine Ellis who says of the Pitjatjantjara people’s music: they have “perfect rhythm designed to transcend time itself”.

¹⁸ M. Harvey, *The Dreaming*, cited in Swain, p. 25.

¹⁹ Swain, p. 25.

²⁰ W. H. Stanner, *After the Dreaming* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Company, 1969), p. 234.

²¹ See, for example: Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge, 1962; original French 1945); Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969; original French, 1958); Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991; original French, 1974); Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990; original French, 1980); Mark Wynn, “Knowledge of God, Knowledge of Place, and the Aesthetic Dimension of Religious Understanding”, *Australian Ejournal of Theology*, Issue 11 (Easter 2008). Accessed (15/02/09):http://www.acu.edu.au/about_acu/faculties_schools_institutes/faculties/theology_and_philosophy/schools/theology/ejournal/past_issues/aejt_11/Aesthetic_Dimension_of_Religious_Understanding/

²² Commenting on this, Merleau-Ponty states: “The field itself is not given to him, but present as the immanent term of his practical intentions; the player becomes one with it and feels the direction of the goal, for example just as immediately as the vertical and horizontal planes of his own body”. *The Structure of Behaviour* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1967; original French, 1942), p. 168. Perhaps it is the ability of Aboriginals to ‘be at one’ with the land that explains their particular prowess in Australian football.

²³ Cited in Wynn.

²⁴ In fact, for Rahner, this is the path to knowledge of God and the divine mystery—or the way to the human knower’s unobjective grasp of self and Infinite Being. See, for example, Karl Rahner, *Foundations of Christian Faith* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978; original German, 1976), pp. 51—71. Panikkar of course speaks of this as ‘mystical awareness’ or ‘transhistorical consciousness’: “It is a consciousness that supersedes time—or rather which reaches the fullness of time, since the three times are simultaneously experienced”. *The Cosmotheandric Experience*, pp. 132ff.

²⁵ In this regard, Merleau-Ponty states: “Our bodily experience of movement is not a particular case of [intellectual or conceptual] knowledge; it provides us with a way of access to the world and the object ... which has to be recognised as original and perhaps as primary ... ”. Cited by John Haldane in John Haldane (ed.), *Mind, Metaphysics and Value in the Thomistic and Analytical Traditions* (Notre Dame IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), p. 57. [Note: bracketed phrases are original].

²⁶ *The Production of Space*. p. 42. Lefebvre further comments on what he terms “spatial representation” where “space is directly *lived* through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of *inhabitants* and *users*”, p. 39.

²⁷ This is connected to Pierre Bourdieu's notion of the *habitus* which, Mark Wynn suggests, “can be read as another way into the idea that there is a knowledge of the human meaning of space that is embodied rather than explicitly articulated, and that can be extended in the direction of a verbally tacit metaphysic. The *habitus* is roughly a set of dispositions to behave which exhibits its own kind of intelligence or appropriate practical responsiveness independently of discursive thought (comparable for example to having a 'feel' for a game). Reference to Bourdieu, p. 68.

²⁸ Wynn. Reference to Bourdieu, p. 69.

²⁹ Wynn identifies this theme is evident in writers such as Ted Hughes, R.S. Thomas and Seamus Heaney, citing *Edward Picot, Outcasts from Eden: Ideas of Landscape in British Poetry Since 1945* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997). To this, Panikkar adds that “our contact with nature is not primarily conceptual but, rather, existential, even cutaneous, a characteristic that does not eliminate the participation of our intellect in the experience of nature”. Panikkar, *Experience of God*, p. 127.

³⁰ Panikkar expresses this as follows: “Although humans become so in community, the human community is not limited to its fellow human creatures. The human community is also cosmic since the human is an integral, even, constitutive part of the cosmos”. *Experience of God*, p. 127.

³¹ See Miriam Rose Ungmerr-Baumann, pp. 34-37.

³² As with all things Aboriginal, there is a plurality of names for this Sacred Spirit: *Baiame* is the great Spirit of the south-eastern areas; *Nooralie* dwells in the heart of the Murray River region and surrounding lands; in the West, we hear of the call of *Wandjina*. See Joan Hendriks in *Spirituality of Catholic Aborigines*, p. 32.

³³ Panikkar, *Experience of God*, pp. 128f.

³⁴ This is, of course, what Panikkar has termed on many occasions, “the golden rule of hermeneutics”. See, for example, his *Intra-Religious Dialogue*, 2nd ed. (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), p. 65.

³⁵ To quote the famous phrase of the English poet, William Blake.

³⁶ *Experience of God*, p. 129.

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BIO: Aunty Joan Hendriks is a distinguished Aboriginal elder, descendant of the Ngugi people, the first inhabitants of Moorgumpin Island, Moreton Bay, Queensland. She teaches and studies at Australian Catholic University, Brisbane, and is an esteemed Indigenous voice on many Australian Government and Church bodies. She presented this paper with the assistance of Gerard Hall in Venice, May 2008, at a Conference on *Mysticism, Fullness of Life: Homage to Raimon Panikkar*. The paper is to be published in the Proceedings of the Conference. The authors have represented Australian religious and spiritual traditions for the past three years at the Panikkar-inspired international Spirit of Religion Project in Europe.

Email: "Joan Hendriks" momo628@bigpond.com; Gerard.Hall@acu.edu.au